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Eric Priest (ed.), *Reason and Wonder: Why science and faith need each other*

London: SPCK, 2016. pp. 211 + xix. £?

In recent years Eric Priest, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at the University of St Andrews, has organized a series of public lectures there, in which distinguished speakers have explored a variety of themes in the burgeoning field of science and religion. This book brings together twelve contributions to that series, with a scene-setting introduction by the editor. They are richly varied in their approach and in their subject matter, but together form a valuable resource in looking at the many ways in which the interaction of science and religion has recently been moving beyond the tired ‘conflict’ model propounded by so many popular commentators.

The contributors come from a wide range of disciplines. Some bring specific insights from their areas of expertise, whilst others offer more general reflections. In the former category, I particularly enjoyed the contributions of astronomer Jennifer Wiseman, glycobiochemist Pauline Rudd, psychologist David G. Myers and neonatologist John Wyatt. Myers’ analysis of how data on religious engagement can throw up radically different results when considered at the societal and individual level is particularly striking, and Wyatt’s thoughts about personhood are carefully nuanced. Philosophical contributions from Keith Ward (on God and the ‘new atheism’), Eleonore Stump (on natural law and reductionism), and Michael J. Murray and Jeff Schloss (on the problem of evil) offer excellent introductions to these themes, as does David Wilkinson’s chapter on the origin and end of the Universe. Three concluding essays from theologians ask the questions ‘Do the miracles of Jesus contradict science?’ (Mark Harris), and ‘Can a scientist trust the New Testament?’ (Tom Wright) (both authors, perhaps not surprisingly,

resisting straightforward ‘yes or no’ answers to these questions), whilst John Swinton addresses the important issue of the connections between religion, spirituality and health. Swinton helpfully suggests that ‘hospitality’ is the best way of framing the ongoing relationship between science and religion: ‘if I approach you with confidence that what I have to bring to the table is important and will be valued, then we can commune. If you can come to me with the same confidence, then we can have a conversation, and in the end we may become friends’ (p. 168).

Most of these contributions are brief, presumably reflecting the limitations of their original provenance as lectures. Whilst this means that some chapters are models of concision in the presentation of their arguments (e.g. Ward and Wyatt), there is an occasional sense of frustration that there is not room for more from some of the contributors (e.g. Stump and Wright). However, each chapter is accompanied by a list of further reading to enable interested readers to pursue topics if they wish to do so. There is also a list of questions for discussion based on each chapter, making this an ideal book for group study.

In his contribution on ‘Evolution, faith and science’, biologist Kenneth R. Miller comments that ‘Ultimately, the religion and science debate continues because of a deep antagonism between extremists on both sides of the issue’ (p. 93). Anyone who is not committed to an extremist position, whether they are coming from a religious or a scientific viewpoint, will find much with which they can profitably engage in this lively book.

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